



Sheila Dixon

*Mayor,
Baltimore*

250 City Hall • Baltimore Maryland 21202
410-396-3835 • Fax: 410-576-9425

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CONTACT:

**Anthony McCarthy
(410) 869-6079 (Cell)**

Baltimore City Announces Code Red Heat Alert Plan

Baltimore, MD (May 30, 2007) – As the temperature climbs, Mayor Sheila Dixon and other Baltimore City officials are announcing the city's Code Red Heat Alert strategy at 10 a.m. in the Executive Conference Room at City Hall. The strategy is a multi-agency effort designed to protect vulnerable Baltimore City residents on dangerously hot days.

Last summer, according to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 16 city residents died of conditions related to the heat.

With collaboration across six city agencies, the Code Red Heat Alert strategy provides heat safety information, outreach efforts, and immediate assistance to vulnerable residents. The Health Commissioner declares Code Red Heat Alerts on days when heat conditions are predicted to be hazardous by the National Weather Service and the Baltimore/Washington Heat Health Watch Warning System.

"We can't control the weather, but we can limit the toll extreme conditions take on our most vulnerable citizens," Mayor Dixon said. "Our cooling centers and other efforts can and do save lives. I encourage anyone who needs to escape the heat to take advantage of this valuable resource when there is a Code Red Heat Alert."

When a Code Red Heat Alert is in effect, the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Commission on Aging and Retirement Education will open cooling centers around the city. The cooling centers will offer air-conditioned space and cold water for residents without access to cool air in their homes.

Additional outreach efforts will be coordinated through the Commission on Aging and Retirement Education (CARE), the Police Department, the Fire Department, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods. These efforts will include:

- Alerts to community leaders and senior service organizations with reminders to watch out for elderly and vulnerable neighbors;
- Distribution of heat safety tips through home visits, the City 311 line, and local media outlets;
- Reaching out to citizens already identified as vulnerable;

- Outreach to vulnerable residents to determine eligibility for energy assistance; and
- Tracking requests for information and help via 311.

The Baltimore City Health Department recommends that on hot days, city residents:

- Drink plenty of water or juice
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine
- Wipe skin with cool water as needed
- Reduce outside activities
- Wear light weight and light-colored clothing
- Stay inside during the hottest time of day
- Watch out for signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke:
 - confusion
 - nausea
 - light-headedness
 - high body temperature with cool and clammy skin
- Seek medical help immediately if any of these symptoms occur
- Seek relief from the heat in air-conditioned locations
- Check on older, sick, or frail people in your community who may need help responding to the heat

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